



TESTIMONY OF

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PUBLIC HEALTH COMMITTEE

MARCH 28, 2022

**HB 5397/477 AN ACT DECLARING GUN VIOLENCE A PUBLIC HEALTH
CRISIS AND AN ACT CONCERNING THE PUBLIC HEALTH OF RESIDENTS
OF THE STATE**

Thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony today. I am David Shapiro, Chief Medical Officer at Saint Francis Hospital here in Hartford, one of the five hospital complement of Trinity Health Of New England. Though I serve in this leadership role, I am a trauma surgeon and critical care physician, and see first hand the devastation of gun violence and firearm related trauma.

In addition to these hospitals, our ministry includes physician practices, ambulatory services networks, home health and post-acute services, as well as services for community health and well being. We are more than 10,000 health care providers committed to being a healing and transforming presence in the communities we serve.

First, I must thank you for the critical legislation passed last session dealing with gun violence intervention and prevention. Special attention is owed to Senator Moore and Representative Gilchrest who continue to champion this issue. In addition to providing Medicaid reimbursement for Violence Prevention Professionals, that legislation created an Advisory Committee to study gun violence intervention and prevention, where I served as a member. This committee was chaired by Andrew Woods, President of Hartford Communities That Care (HCTC) our community partner for over 16 years. The committee submitted their report to the legislative committees of

cognizance on December 31, 2021 citing the need to coordinate funding, implement evidence-based community-focused programs and develop strategies to reduce street level gun violence in our state and provide interventions to stop the pattern of gun-related violence.

I am so pleased that Governor Lamont's budget, HB 5037, included some funding to support community-based gun violence programs with similar models to ours.

The care givers at Saint Francis Hospital and Medical Center appreciate the value of these kinds of programs. We have been blessed to partner with HCTC and welcome them into our Emergency Department 24 hour/day, 365 days/year - whenever we have gunshot victims and their loved ones present. They connect with the family and with the victim either in the Emergency Department or when the patient is stabilized after surgical interventions. The members of the HCTC response team, many of whom have experienced violence in their own lives, also work in the community to reduce the possibility of retribution in the hours and days after inciting incidents. Patients and their families are assisted in navigating the process to obtain funding through Victims of Crime Act and other financial supports, behavioral health support, and to assure that the medical homecare safety net is in place. To date, over 1,800 victims of gun violence and their families have received assistance.

I ask that you support these community -based violence prevention and intervention programs with the appropriate funding and that you include the necessary Medicaid funding to reimburse these violence prevention services as outlined in last year's legislation (PA 21-36). These are imperative to the community healing and advancement of our prevention paradigm.

By funding these initiatives, you will ensure that the victims of gun violence and their families receive the programs and services they deserve, and importantly help to reduce the incidents of gun violence in our communities.

Thank you for your consideration of our position. For additional information, contact Dan Keenan at dkeenan@trinity-health.org or 860-714-0437.